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NOTES ON KIMBERLEY BIRDS

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Storr (1980) produced a synthesis on the occurrence, status, taxonomy and breeding seasons of birds in the Kimberley Division of Western Australia. From 25 February to 4 May 1986 I carried out field research with N. Kolichis, A. Bougher and J. Brandenburg on the birds of the Kimberley and neighbouring part of the Northern Territory. New information is reported in these notes.

Aviceda subcristata **Crested Hawk**

This species is seldom seen in the Kimberley. On 27-28 April four were seen and two collected in dense eucalypt woodland 2 km west of Oobagooma homestead, near the south-western corner of the Wyndham range.

Petrophassa albipennis **White-quilled Rock-Pigeon**

We found four nests with eggs: a fresh clutch of two on 3 March near Galvans Gorge; two eggs chipping on 19 March near Manning Gorge; one partly incubated egg on 26 March in a broken sandstone range about the upper Drysdale (18 km north of Mt Lacy); and two fresh eggs on 12 April at Skinner Point, N.T. Each nest consisted of a scanty platform of twigs in a slight depression on large flat-topped boulders varying in size from about 2.5 to 6 m³. This species was common in the Bungle Bungle Range especially about Piccaninny Creek where we saw 30-40 birds on 19 April; this better defines the south-eastern range limit in the Kimberley.

Calyptorhynchus magnificus **Red-tailed Black-cockatoo**

On 4 May we saw four birds near the Sandfire Roadhouse. It is unknown whether they belonged to the Kimberley population (subspecies *macrorhynchus*) or the Pilbara population (subspecies *samuelli*).

Cacatua sanguinea **Little Corella**

On 3 May about 20 corellas were feeding beside the road 27 km south-west of the Anna Plains turnoff, and on 4 May about ten were flying over an almost treeless spinifex-covered plain 8 km

east of the Mandora turnoff. Four birds (WAM A20391-4) collected from the first flock are like northern Pilbara and south-western Kimberley birds in measurements and colour.

***Chrysococcyx lucidus* Shining Bronze-Cuckoo**

An adult was collected by N. Kolichis on 25 February in paperbark woodland (*Melaleuca acacioides*) 19 km south-west of the Anna Plains turnoff. Storr (1980) reported one other Kimberley occurrence — an immature collected near Cape Bertholet on 17 April 1977.

***Centropus phasianinus* Pheasant Coucal**

On 25 February four birds, including a short-tailed fledgling, were seen in dense *Melaleuca acacioides* 19 km south-west of the Anna Plains turnoff. This species had previously been seen south to Nita Downs.

***Scythrops novaehollandiae* Channel-billed Cuckoo**

A large, almost adult-plumaged, immature attended by a Torresian Crow (*Corvus orru*) was seen 24 km south of the new Mt Elizabeth homestead on 30 March. Three immatures associated with Torresian Crows were seen and one was collected on 15 April along Osmond Creek, on the plain below the main Osmond Gorge.

***Lalage leucomela* Varied Triller**

Eight were seen and two collected on 26-27 March in dense scrub in sandstone gullies of a rugged sandstone range about the upper Drysdale River, 18 km north of Mt Lacy. This record defines the southern limit more precisely.

***Oreoica gutturalis* Crested Bellbird**

Four males and one female of an aberrant-singing population were collected about the Karunjie turnoff on the new Gibb River Road on 1-2 April. The birds were in low, scrubby, open woodland (eucalypts, wattles, pines, broad-leaved trees) with a variable understorey of scattered *Calytrix* heath-shrubs, stunted tussocks of spinifex and tall sorghum grass. A female was flushed from two eggs in a nest about 1.7 m above the ground in a hollowed out stump with sprouting foliage. I estimated about seven pairs in an area of about 4-6 km². A further report on this peculiar population will be published elsewhere. A bird with the typical call was heard 6 km west of the Bungle Bungle Range on the track to the Great Northern Highway via the pass near Nicks Bite and Mt Ranford.

***Rhipidura fulliginosa* Grey Fantail**

A lone individual of the south-eastern subspecies *alisteri* was collected in snappy gums at the base of the south-western corner of the Bungle Bungle Range on 18 April. As yet the south-western breeding population *preissi* has not been found in the Kimberley though it migrates to the Pilbara (Storr 1984).

***Rhipidura phasiana* Mangrove Grey Fantail**

A lone bird was collected in *Melaleuca acacioides* on 3 May, 19 km south-west of the Anna Plains turnoff. This represents a slight extension of range south and inland. Normally it is confined to coastal mangroves.

***Gerygone levigaster* Mangrove Flyeater**

We found three nests in *Melaleuca* forest on the northern edge of Roebuck Plains on 26 February; one nest contained two fresh eggs, another three small young with pin feathers, and the third

had apparently just been completed. This is more than a month earlier than the egg dates given by Storr (1980). Two birds were seen and one was collected on 3 May in dense *Melaleuca acacioides*, partly overgrown with dodder, 19 km south-west of the Anna Plains turnoff. This is an extension of range from Mannerie Swamp, Nita Downs.

Gerygone tenebrosa **Dusky Flyeater**

Nine specimens were collected in dense mangroves on 29-30 April, 12 km south-west of Kimbolton homestead on Yampi Peninsula. The record from Kunmunya listed by Storr (1980) is referable to the Large-billed Flyeater, *G. magnirostris* (Ford 1984).

Malurus lamberti **Variegated Fairy-Wren**

We collected a series of the subspecies *rogersi* in scrub on granite hills of the King Leopold Ranges, 20 km east of Napier Downs homestead on 11-13 March. About Piccaninny Gorge in the Bungle Bungle Range we collected a series of intermediates between *assimilis* and *rogersi* on 18-19 April.

Acanthiza pusilla **Brown Thornbill**

Fourteen birds were seen and six collected in *Melaleuca acacioides* low forest/woodland and associated *Acacia* scrub on 25 February and 3 May, 19 km south-west of the Anna Plains turnoff. Storr (1980) did not include this species in his Kimberley list, but Graeme Chapman showed me a photograph of a bird that he photographed at this locality on 21 May 1983. The series is the most pallid dorsally and the most weakly streaked on the breast of all populations sampled in Western Australia, including those from the Hamersley Plateau and Canning Stock Route about Well 35.

Eremiornis carteri **Spinifex-bird**

From 17-21 April we saw single birds in big clumps of *Triodia* 8.5 km east of Nicks Bite and near the south-western corner of the Bungle Bungle Range. These records represent a slight extension in range northward from the Hardman Range.

Megalurus timorensis **Tawny Grassbird**

Several birds including an adult pair with fledglings were seen and two collected on 6 April in bullrush and tall grass around the margin of Packsaddle Swamp. Storr (1980) gave the distribution as subhumid western coasts and coastal plains, from Napier Broome Bay to the Yampi Peninsula, so the occurrence at Packsaddle Swamp is a considerable range extension eastwards.

Meliphaga albilineata **White-lined Honeyeater**

Several were seen and two collected in dense scrub about gullies in tall gums on plateaux of a rugged sandstone range about the upper Drysdale River, 18 km north of Mt Lacy. This defines the southern range more precisely.

Acanthagenys rufogularis **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater**

In the Kimberley this species was previously only known from the south-eastern arid zone. On 25 February we saw and heard one in *Acacia* scrub surrounding a large shallow depression with dense *Melaleuca acacioides*, 19 km south-west of the Anna Plains turnoff.

Certhionyx variegatus **Pied Honeyeater**

The following two sightings on 3 May extend the range slightly west and north in the Kimberley: two birds in *Melaleuca acacioides*

woodland, 19 km south-west of the Anna Plains turnoff; and a male in flowering *M. acacioides* on the northern edge of Roebuck Plains, Great Northern Highway.

Sphecotheres viridis **Figbird**

There are few records of this species in the Kimberley. We saw a male in riverine cadjeputs and a pair in broad-leaved scrub in a sandstone gully near the upper Drysdale, 18 km north of Mt Lacy.

Artamus superciliosus **White-browed Woodswallow**

Several were seen and a pair was collected in flowering, low mallee, 10 km east of the Landrigan Creek crossing on the Halls Creek-Fitzroy Crossing Highway on 23 April. They were associated with a loose flock of over 100 Masked Woodswallows (*A. personatus*). This species is a rare visitor to the Kimberley and had previously been seen only in West Kimberley.

Cracticus torquatus **Grey Butcherbird**

We had a brief view of a bird we felt sure was this species in tall wattles and eucalypts, 47 km east along the Gibb River Road from the Derby turnoff on 26 February. This species was positively seen in dense woodland or forest at the following places: extreme south-west of the Wyndham Range; King Leopold Ranges, 20 km east of Napier Downs homestead; Galvans Gorge; Manning Gorge; and the Saw Ranges about Dunham Pilot Dam.

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AN EXAMPLE OF EDGE EFFECT ON ANTS IN THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN WHEATBELT

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In April 1983 I accompanied members of the Intermediate Section of the Western Australian Naturalists' Club on an excursion to East Ballidu to study the edge effect between farmland and bushland. 'Edge effect' being as defined in Lincoln et al. (1982) as follows:

'edge effect: The effect exerted by adjoining communities on the population structure within the marginal zone (ecotone), which often contains a greater number of species and higher population densities of some species than either adjoining community.'